

SANDIA RANGER DISTRICT RESOURCE BRIEFING GUIDE 2021

Updated 1/21/2020

CIBOLA NATIONAL FOREST
SANDIA RANGER DISTRICT
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Sandia Ranger District Briefing Guide

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Cibola National Forest General Information

The Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands are located in New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma and are part of the Southwestern Region.

The Cibola National Forest covers more than 1.6 million acres in New Mexico, with elevations ranging from 2,700 feet to over 11,300 feet. We have four ranger districts: Sandia, Mountainair D-5, Magdalena D-4, and Mt. Taylor D-2. In addition, the Cibola has four wilderness areas: Sandia Mountain, Manzano Mountain, Withington, and Apache Kid.

The Cibola also administers four National Grasslands: Black Kettle, McClellan Creek, Kiowa, and Rita Blanca, which cover 263,261 acres in northeastern New Mexico, western Oklahoma, and northern Texas.

Sandia Ranger District General Information

The Sandia Ranger district is one of five mountain districts located on the Cibola National Forest & Grasslands. Just east of Albuquerque are the most visited mountains in New Mexico. Millions of people journey into the Sandia Mountains each year. More than half these visitors ride the Sandia Peak Tram or drive the Sandia Crest National Scenic Byway to take in spectacular panoramic views of Central New Mexico and to enjoy many other recreational opportunities. The Sandia Crest Scenic Byway 536 has several newly remodeled picnic grounds with shelters and group areas for reservation.

The Sandia's are part of the signature of Albuquerque's unique sense of place. They serve as a premier refuge to a population of over 700,000 people in the extended metropolitan area. Over one-third of the State's school-age population lives within an hour's drive of the Sandia's, and there is a great demand for fire prevention, fire ecology, and other environmental education programs.

The lesser-known southern part of the District includes the Manzanita Mountains, which form a low ridge between the Sandia's to the north and the Manzano Mountains to the south.

A portion of this area is in the Military Withdrawal, where public use has been restricted since 1943. The Military Withdrawal and adjacent Forest Service land is currently the subject of intensive ecosystem planning to reduce fuel loads and the risk of wildfire, to enhance wildlife habitat and ecosystem health.

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Weather

The Sandia Mountains ranges from 6,500 feet at the foothills to 10,678 feet of elevation at the crest. The Sandia's encounter all four seasons throughout the year.

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Watch out weather thresholds that support active fire behavior are any of these combinations;

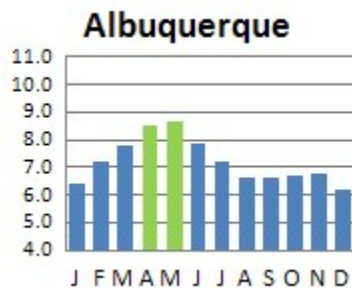
20' Wind Speeds over 9 MPH, **RH** less than 8%, **Temperature** over 85 degrees F.

NWS Albuquerque issues high wind warnings when winds are expected to have sustained speeds of 40 mph or greater and/or instantaneous gusts of 58 mph or higher. Typical high wind events are also most common in the Spring.

High wind events often have a westerly component. During the Spring months two factors work in tandem to create strong winds. By March or April, the polar jet stream has started migrating northward but can still often influence the southwest U.S., such that wind speeds increase dramatically with height. Meanwhile, the sun angle is getting higher in the sky and creating greater heating near the surface of the earth. The heated surface air rises to a greater depth of the atmosphere during these spring months, often to a height between 7,500 and 10,000 feet above the surface. The rising air mixes with stronger winds aloft, resulting in stronger and turbulent winds mixing down to the surface. Strong surface pressure gradients can enhance surface winds. High wind events across New Mexico can also occur with strong surface fronts, especially those that race through the eastern plains.

All weather information charts are to be used as reference and do not replace taking Spot Weather observations during fire management activates.

Monthly Wind Speed Mean



Source: Weather Atlas <https://www.weather-us.com/en/new-mexico-usa/albuquerque-climate>

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Average high in °F	43	47	53	61	71	82
Average low in °F	22	26	31	37	46	53
Av. precipitation in inch	1.52	0.86	1.79	1.01	0.99	1.22
Av. snowfall in inch	11	10	13	4	0	0

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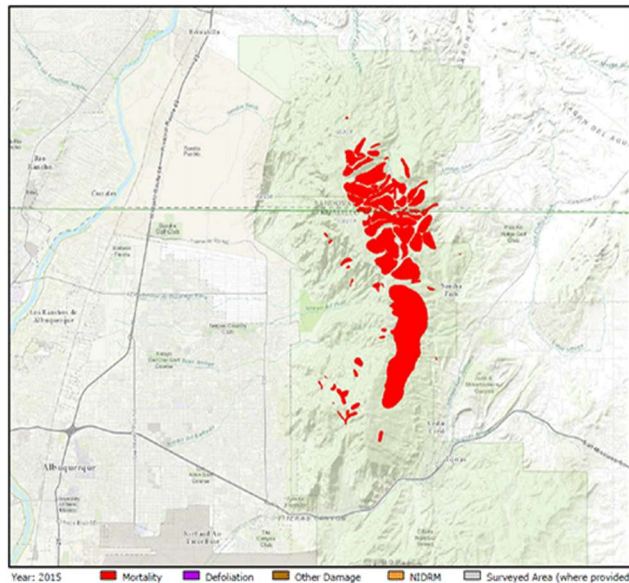
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	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average high in °F	84	81	75	64	52	43
Average low in °F	58	57	50	40	30	22
Av. precipitation in inch	3.28	2.87	1.86	1.82	1.27	1.45
Av. snowfall in inch	0	0	0	3	7	11

Ecology & Fuels

The Sandia's encompass four different named life zones due to the large elevation change, and the resulting changes in temperature and amount of precipitation, from the base to the top. The desert grassland and savanna at the western base of the mountain (near the eastern edge of the City of Albuquerque, uphill of about Eubank or Juan Tabo Boulevards) is part of the *Upper Sonoran Zone*. From 5,500 to 7,200 ft (1,700 to 2,200 m), the Upper Sonoran Zone is found, but notable differences occur: one first finds a zone of primarily juniper, then a mixed Piñon-Juniper-evergreen Oak zone, while a thin cover of black grama grass (*Bouteloua eriopoda*) shifts in its dominance to a less thin cover of blue grama grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*); some plants of Chihuahuan Desert affinities are found in this area, including oreganillo (*Aloysia wrightii*), mariola (*Parthenium incanum*), desert marigold (*Baileya* spp.), and subspecies of the often-numerous Engelmann prickly pear (*Opuntia engelmannii*). From 7,200 to 7,800 ft (2,200 to 2,400 m), in the *Transition Zone*, Ponderosa Pine dominates, and evergreen oaks change to more cold-tolerant deciduous oaks. From 7,800 to 9,800 ft (2,400 to 3,000 m), a mixture of conifers occurs in the *Canadian Zone*; Gambel Oak (*Quercus gambelii*) is at its uppermost natural range in this zone. Finally, from 9,800 ft (3,000 m) to the Sandia Crest at 10,678 ft (3,255 m), mostly on the eastern side, spruce and fir dominate the *Hudsonian Zone*. (All zone boundary elevations are approximate, depending on microclimate or aspect.)

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From 2012 to 2016, elevated white fir mortality caused by the fir engraver bark beetle has been widespread across the Sandia Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest, New Mexico. Although severe drought conditions have alleviated, tree mortality continues in the area. The white fir mortality has been widespread across much of the northern parts of the ranger district.

-Mortality

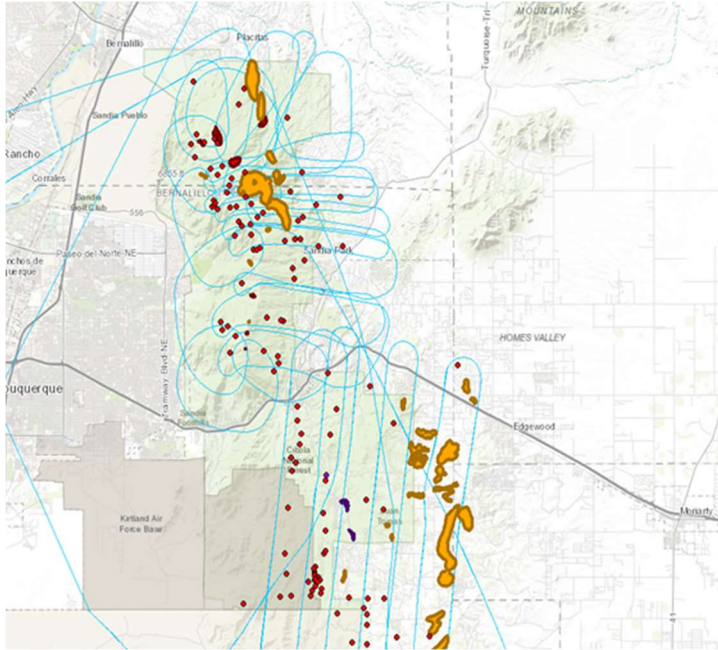
Outbreaks of the Douglas-fir tussock moth have been observed throughout the region over the past few years, particularly in the Sandia Mountains areas of the forest that have been stripped of foliage during the past few years.

This outbreak started along the bottom of Pino

Canyon on the west side of the Sandia Mountains in 2004. The outbreak expanded considerably in 2005 into the upper portions of the Pino Canyon and portions of Domingo Baca Canyon to the north.

Evaluations of the outbreak areas throughout the summer and fall of 2005 found that many caterpillars were being affected by natural predators (both a virus and several parasites). Because of these predators, the outbreak on the west side of the Sandia's collapsed in 2006. New activity, however, was observed on the east side of the mountains (see map below) in late 2005 and into 2006. This defoliation has been quite visible to visitors along the Crest Highway. The tussock moth activity observed during our 2007 surveys was north of the Crest Highway in Capulin, Las Huertas, and Media canyons. Smaller areas of defoliation were also observed in the Cañon del Agua area on the northwest side of the mountains. While significant areas of the mountain have been impacted since 2004 surveys of the Sandia Mountains

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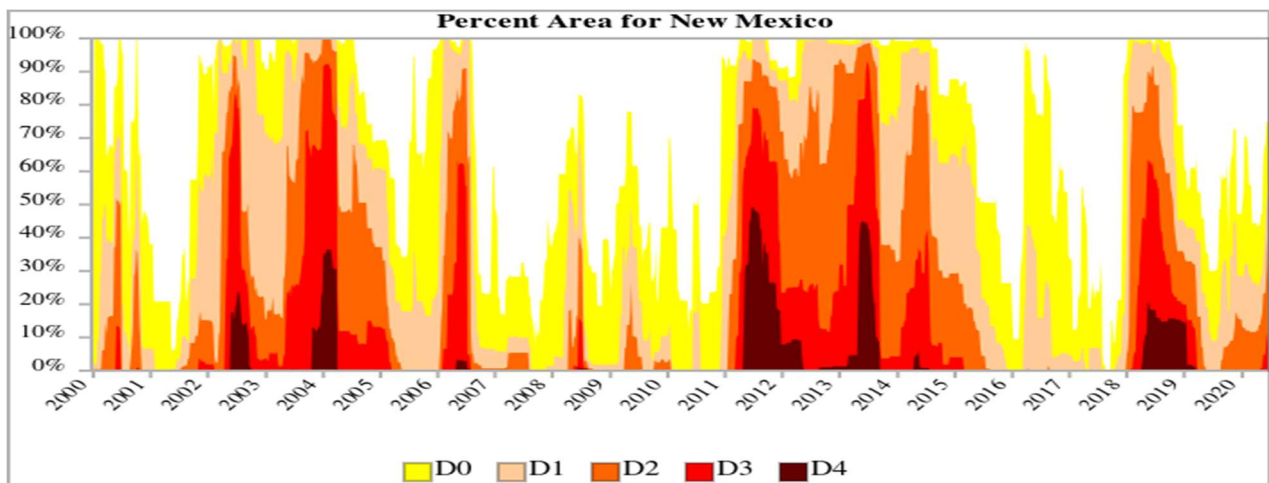


Map reflects 2019 survey.

■ Mortality
 ■ Defoliation
 ■ Other Damage

Due to the drought conditions forest health has been impacted by insect and disease activity. Multiple years of drought have been observed and within the last year from 2018 to 2019 drought conditions across New Mexico have increased. Showing current condition as of June 16th, 2020 the conditions are showing abnormally dry for the year.

With the impacts of drought, insect and disease mortality defoliation and the extreme buildup of dead fuels on the forest floor. These conditions will offer high fire resistance to control and can be even more difficult when condition combine with the **thresholds** for the district area.



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Initial Attack Operations /Protocols

- Initial Attack resources will be dispatched after making contact with the district Duty Officer. Duty Officer will inform dispatch of what resources to assign. Most of the time using the closest resource, with additional resources to follow based on the need from the IC and Duty Officers direction during initial response.
- Resources are to maintain communications with Albuquerque dispatch at all times. Checking in to dispatch when in service to location, changing location, arrival on scene, departure and arrival back in station. Cell phone communication is ok for cases when radios are highly busy.
- All fires/smoke will be reported to dispatch immediately with a brief size up- location: Township, Range and Section, or Latitude & Longitude WGS84 format Degrees, Decimal Minutes (dd mm,mmm)-smoke color and volume-values at risk and any resources currently needed. Detailed size up to follow **soon** after arrival on scene to paint a clear picture with a good leader's intent.
- Every Incident Commander will follow the Incident Operational Protocols in the Initial Attack Organizer.
- Every Incident Commander will review additional information located directly below the Incident Operational Protocols and apply what is necessary based on the Incident Objectives
- All incidents are assigned a Wildcat Incident Number. This Incident number will be provided to the resources responding and will be used in communication referencing the fire (i.e." Engine 651 responding to Incident 234" refrain from saying " we are enroute or responding to the fire") Be sure to include this number on all pertinent documents related to the incident (Incident Organizer, Field Report, Unit Logs etc.)
- Command will be utilizing closest repeater, Air to Ground 53, and Tactical Channel 3 will be utilized when responding to incidents within the Sandia Ranger District. It will be the Incident Commanders responsibility to relay this information to Dispatch and any additional resources as they arrive. With multiple fires on district tactical channels will be assigned by IC of the incident utilizing TAC 1 or 2.
- Once on scene, ensure the appropriate level of Incident Commander is designated and accounted for all resources on scene and enroute. Inform dispatch of the IC and when any changes in command are made. The IC will name the fire using a geographic reference (Provided the fire has not already been named). This name will be relayed to dispatch to determine if the name is suitable (not previously used). At the time of naming the fire the IC will be referred as "name of fire" IC (Cedro IC),
- No action is to be taken on the fire unless you have positive communication with dispatch. Cell phone communication while not desirable, is acceptable until radio communication problems can be mitigated. If there is a need to establish a human repeater assign a resource already on the fire or order one.
- Ensure that all human caused fires or fires of unknown cause have the point of origin protected and a fire investigator is ordered through dispatch.
- Inform dispatch of your fire needs (meal, additional resources etc.) and intentions to stay out and staff the fire overnight before 1600, so staffing maybe planned accordingly.
- All Wilderness intrusions must be approved by the Line Officer **before implementing**. Consider MIST tactics and document all intrusions in the Incident Organizer.

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Code of Conduct for Fire Suppression

- Firefighter & Public Safety comes first on every fire every time.
- Every firefighter has the right to know that his/her assignments are safe.
- Every Fireline supervisor, every fire manager and every agency administrator has the responsibility to confirm that safe practices are known and observed.
- All resources responding to an incident will check with the IC, the ICP, or staging for a briefing, prior to commencing any work on the incident.
- A dedicated IC is required for all incidents. Collateral duties will not be acceptable during the role as IC.

Hazards & Risks

KAFB-Withdrawn Area- Kirtland Airforce Base borders the Southwest boundary of the Sandia Ranger District from I 40 South along David Canyon. This area is known to have Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). Following the UXO Safety in the IRPG will be utilized. No ground resource engagement for fire suppression will take place until contact is made with the DO to provide direction.

Vandals- Vandalization to equipment and property is not uncommon to Government owed vehicles or equipment. Vandalization can range from denting doors on vehicles to breaking window to further go theft. Utilizing situational awareness to help in mitigating the unexpected outcome of becoming vandalized.

Theft or Break In- It is not uncommon to have equipment vandalized or vehicle's broken into within the surrounding areas of the Sandia's. If you are here on assignment, ensure that all equipment is locked up or removed from vehicles. Items are out of plain sight that may entice the idea of breaking into a vehicle. Look for well lit areas to park vehicles and do not leave anything to chance.

No Commo Areas- Communication is mandatory before engaging on an incident. The terrain within the Sandia Ranger District can inhibit communication at times. Follow the expectations outlined in the Initial Attack Operations. No Commo areas that may provide poor Radio and Cell communications are in the area of FS 165, Las Huertas Canyon and the Radio Towers at the top of the crest.

Retardant Avoidance- The only pre-identified area for retardant avoidance would be the Radio and Cell towers located on the top of the Crest Highway. All other locations should be a conversation with ABQ Dispatch prior to ordering.

Ordering

- Order resource by type not by name requesting. For example, Order Type 6 Engine, not Engine 652. Be specific in what you want (numbers, type, size, etc.) Be specific and realistic on the date and time resource/supplies are needed. Consolidate your orders the best to your ability to eliminate numerous trips to your fire. Give good directions to the reporting location and utilize flagging to the incident. For request that are unusual or unique provide justification.

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- For meals, plan to be self-sufficient for at least the first 24 hours with a possibility of 48 hours. When ordering meals order at least a meal ahead, i.e. morning for dinner. Plan for incoming resources and update dispatch as soon as possible.

Aircraft

- When ordering aircraft for your incident, clearly state any threats (primary resident, secondary residents, outbuildings, communication sites, resources concerns, etc.) This will determine resource allocation and assist with setting priorities.
- Aircraft assigned to your incident will flight follow with ABC dispatch Aircraft Desk on National Flight Follow Frequency 168.650 and a Tone Guard of 110.9 RX/TX or Automated Flight Following (AFF) until positive communication is made with incident. At that time the aircraft will be flight following locally with the incident. It is the IC's responsibility to notify dispatch when aircraft arrives on scene and are in contact. It is also the IC's responsibility to notify dispatch when the aircraft are departing the incident. This will enable a smooth transition for handing off the flight following responsibilities.
- If several aircraft are assigned to your incident and it is expected to be a multi-day event, order an Air Attack (ATGS) if not already assigned and request a Temporary Flight Restriction-TFR a Temporary Flight Restriction-TFR should be requested. If an order for a TFR is not received, dispatch may inquire to the IC to make a request for a TFR if deemed necessary.
- Inform dispatch immediately of any TFR intrusions. Provide aircraft type, color and tail number if possible. SafeCom should be filed.

Demobilization

- If possible, notify dispatch and DO of tentative resource release in advance of planned demobilization from your fire. Resources may be reassigned based on priority and need of other incidents. Tentative release does not facilitate an automatic release of a resource. Official release must be made by the IC and relayed to ABC dispatch.
- Upon the release of the resources leaving the incident notify dispatch providing ETA to destination.
- In the process of releasing a resource the IC is responsible for closing out with resources. The signing of shift tickets, equipment use, and evaluations should be completed in this process.
- The Incident Organizer is to be completed by the final IC and along with all other associated documents submitted to the AFMO responsible for incident. Incident Organizers should be handed out in the briefing packet and more can be attained from the FMO, AFMO or DO.

Local Initial Attack Resources

- Local district resources will be listed in the IAO with names and contact numbers.
- During the Fire Season Severity all resources will be listed and updated daily using ICS 204.

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Communications

Sandia RD Group 5

Channel	RX	Tone	TX	Tone	Description
1	170.525		170.525	136.5	Cedro Admin
2	170.525		165.0750	114.8	Cedro Repeater
3	170.525		165.0750	136.5	Dome Repeater
4	170.525		165.0750	103.5	La Mosca Repeater
5	170.525		165.0750	146.2	Albuquerque Repeater
6	170.525		165.0750	107.2	Capilla Repeater
7	170.525		165.0750	131.8	Gallinas Repeater
8	165.750		172.225	136.5	Project 1 RPT
9	172.225		172.225	000.0	Project 2 (car to car only)
10	168.6750		168.6750	000.0	TAC-2
11	168.7750		168.7750	000.0	TAC - 3
12	168.350		168.350	000.0	Travel
13	168.4875		168.4875	000.0	A / G 53
14	155.3400		155.3400	156.7	VMED 28
15	154.310		154.310	000.0	State Fire
16	168.625		168.625	110.9	GUARD

Sandia RD Fire/IA Group 9

Channel	RX	Tone	TX	Tone	Description
1	170.525		165.075	103.5	Cibola Repeater
2	170.525		170.525	107.2	Cedro Admn
3	172.225		172.225	110.9	Project 2(car to car only)
4	172.675		172.675	114.8	BIA SPA
5	159.225		159.225	123.0	State Forestry
6	154.310		154.310	131.8	State Fire
7	172.500		169.775	192.8	BLM RPT
8	169.650		169.650	192.8	BLM Socorro
9	167.5500		167.5500	136.5	TAC - 1
10	168.6750		168.6750	141.3	TAC - 2
11	168.7750		168.7750	146.2	TAC - 3
12	168.350		168.350	156.7	Travel
13	168.4875		168.4875	167.9	A / G 53
14	155.340		154.340	156.7	V MED 28
15	168.0125		168.0125	203.5	A / G 18
16	168.625		168.625	110.9	GUARD

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Local and Regional Internet Sites

Dispatch Centers

Albuquerque Dispatch

<https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/dc/nmabc/index.htm>

Southwest Coordination Center

<https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/index.htm>

National Weather Service

Sandia Weather Zones 106 & 107

<https://www.weather.gov/abq/forecasts-fireweather>

Situation Reports

Southwest Morning Situation Report

[https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/predictive/intelligence/daily/SWCC Morning Situation Report/SWCC Morning Situation Report.htm](https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/predictive/intelligence/daily/SWCC_Morning_Situation_Report/SWCC_Morning_Situation_Report.htm)

National Situation Report

<https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf>

Daily Resource Status Summery

Albuquerque Zone

https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/dc/nmabc/Resource_Status/location-report.php